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HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR

A FARCICAL ROMANCE
In Three Acts

By R. MARSHALL

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BOSTON: WALTER H. BAKER & CO

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.



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CHARACTERS

HIS EXCELLENCY SIR MONTAGU MARTIN, G.C.S.I.
(Governor of the Amandaland Islands).

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY CARLTON, M.P.

CAPTAIN CHARLES CAREW, A.D.C. (On His Excellency's
Staff).

MR. JOHN BAVERSTOCK (Private Secretary).

CAPTAIN RIVERS } (Of the Midland Fusiliers).
MAJOR KILDARE }

A CLERK.

A SENTRY.

A BUTLER.

A FOOTMAN.

MRS. WENTWORTH-BOLINGBROKE.

ETHEL CARLTON.

STELLA DE GEX.

SCENE.— *The Vestibule of Government House,
Amandaland Islands, Indian Ocean.*

TIME.— *Today.*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

THE FIRST ACT

Scene :— The Vestibule of Government House, Amandaland Islands, Indian Ocean. Beyond, a sea-view of picturesque bay in strong sunlight, with tropical vegetation in foreground. Verandah and path at back of stage, with flowering shrubs and a Sentry-box. A large open doorway leads from the verandah to the stage, which forms a spacious apartment, beautifully furnished in Indian fashion. There is an alcove with writing-table, which can be shut off by curtains. There are folding-doors on either side. Large open windows look on to the Bay. Wicker chairs, standing lamps, palms, grasses, flowers, tiger-skins, &c., are grouped about stage. The bells and lamps are electric, and on the wall to the right is a telephone.

As the curtain rises a BUTLER and FOOTMAN are superintending a table laid for breakfast. A SENTRY is on his beat at back, passing to and fro, occasionally standing at ease in front of his box. CAPTAIN CAREW enters. He is a good-looking man of twenty-seven in the undress uniform of an A.D.C. BAVERSTOCK, a close-shaven, taciturn-looking, red-haired man of thirty, in a grey frock-coat suit, is writing at table in alcove. He comes down with papers in his hand as CAREW speaks.

CAREW.

[*Gaily.*] By Jove, what a magnificent morning! A heavy dew has fallen, the air is soft, and there's a perfect orchestra of piping birds in the trees. It's glorious! One never gets a day like this in England.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Morosely, and touching an electric bell.*] Thank heaven, one doesn't. As for tropical orchestras, I prefer a German band on a wet night in London.

CAREW.

Oh, come, cheer up! Remember, to-day heralds the advent of two ladies from England.

BAVERSTOCK.

I resent that. I resent the presence of women in any official building. [*A CLERK enters and BAVERSTOCK hands him despatches.*] These despatches are for His Excellency's signature. They are to be marked "Confidential" and forwarded to Downing Street by the English mail.

CLERK.

Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*]

BUTLER.

[*To CAREW.*] Breakfast is on the table, sir.

CAREW.

Right! [*To BAVERSTOCK.*] Surely, my dear fellow, if a member of the English Cabinet—especially the Minister to whom we are responsible—chooses to visit the Islands, you don't grudge his being accompanied by his sister and daughter?

BAVERSTOCK.

I do. Women have no official existence—or only confidentially. I go farther. I resent any Right Honourable gentleman presuming to visit us.

CAREW.

Why?

BAVERSTOCK.

Why? Because it implies that we don't know our work, that we require his personal scrutiny. I presume that sort of official is termed "Right Honourable" because it is so necessary to emphasise the fact.

CAREW.

But, my good fellow, he's not coming in his ministerial capacity. He's yachting for his health.

BAVERSTOCK.

So he says. Believe me, he comes as a sort of political Paul Pry.

CAREW.

Then I say let him come. He'll find the Islands as trim as a new painted gunboat. Why, there's never been such a popular Governor as Sir Montagu. The Islands were never so prosperous as now. I'm an admirable A.D.C., and you're sufficiently depressing as Private Secretary.

BAVERSTOCK.

Suppose this threatened rising of the natives comes off? The outlook's black enough.

CAREW.

Naturally, as it concerns niggers.

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER.

The English mail is in the harbour, sir, and Mr. Carlton's yacht, *The Butterfly*, is at anchor in the bay. She came in late last night, sir.

CAREW.

Why, then they may be here at any hour? Rooms are prepared for Mr. Carlton and the ladies?

BUTLER.

Everything's ready, sir.

CAREW.

Good. [BUTLER retires, and FOOTMAN enters and remains waiting by doors.] We ought to hurry up with breakfast. [A voice is heard without, singing "Come into the garden, Maud."] Ah! here comes His Excellency.

Enter SIR MONTAGU MARTIN, a smart, good-looking man of forty, carrying a large bunch of roses in his hand. As he passes, the SENTRY presents

arms, SIR MONTAGU *affably acknowledging the salute.*

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Genially.*] Good morning, gentlemen. So *The Butterfly* is in, and the mail; and here's breakfast. Capital! Glorious morning — lovely roses! [*Sits down.*] Now then, what is there?

BUTLER.

[*Pompously.*] Grilled soles, omelette and mushrooms, your Excellency.

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah! Thank you; you needn't wait. [*Exeunt BUTLER and FOOTMAN.*] I've had a line from Carlton. He hopes I won't trouble to meet him on landing, as the hour is uncertain. [*Examining table closely.*] Where on earth has all this yellow dust come from?

CAREW.

I believe it's from the century aloes that are flowering outside.

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah! to be sure. You know the legend the islanders have?

CAREW.

No, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

These particular aloes flower only once in a hundred years, and the yarn goes that in dying of love of their own consummation, the yellow dust of their blossom is blown about and causes an epidemic of love wherever it rests. They say it attacks one quite suddenly. Quaint idea, isn't it?

BAVERSTOCK.

It's a comfort it's only an idea.

CAREW.

Love itself is only an idea, my dear fellow, but a very charming one.

SIR MONTAGU.

Well, well! at last Government House is to be honoured by the presence of two, no doubt, fresh and charming English ladies. Ah, Baverstock! I see a twinkle in your eye.

BAVERSTOCK.

Really, sir? I wasn't aware of it. And I don't imagine the elder lady can be exactly "fresh." She may be well preserved.

SIR MONTAGU.

All your arrangements complete, Carew?

CAREW.

Quite, I think, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*To BAVERSTOCK.*] You've seen to Mr. Carlton's study — given him something to read — journals, papers, and so on?

BAVERSTOCK.

He's got all last year's bluebooks and a waste-paper basket.

SIR MONTAGU.

That's right. By the way, there's one little matter. When you both joined my staff it was understood, you know, that there was to be no question of either of you getting married, or even engaged. Eh, Baverstock?

BAVERSTOCK.

Personally, sir, as you know, I avoid women; although, if only from the fact of my own existence, I gather that they are necessary.

CAREW.

And I am strong in that I love them all.

SIR MONTAGU.

Quite so, my dear Carew; but the only emotion suitable for official folk, such as we are, is a purely platonic friendship. The official in love is an offence against official decency. Ye cannot serve the State and woman.

BAVERSTOCK.

For either ye will cling to ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, precisely. Of course, in your treatment of our guests I wish you to be pleasant, genial, even amusing, if — [*glancing at* BAVERSTOCK] — if that is possible. But nothing more. For myself, I never contemplate matrimony. I am wrapped in my duty to the State, and were a woman to unwrap me I should die of an official chill. There's only one other point I need touch on. Mr. Carlton, the Colonial Secretary, is an extremely important personage, who, duly cultivated, may be of the greatest use to us in the future, particularly to me. It is our duty, therefore, to cultivate him.

CAREW.

But not his daughter?

SIR MONTAGU.

His daughter — within platonic limits. I wish you to appear conversant with the interests of the Islands. Be accurate as to facts. For instance, Baverstock, if you remember, in your despatch to Downing Street on the last census you reported that there were half a million white inhabitants and twenty-five thousand natives, whereas the numbers were really *vice versâ*, and the Home Authorities naturally wanted to know to what cause was due the enormous and sudden multiplication of the whites.

BAVERSTOCK.

A mere slip, sir; a mere slip.

SIR MONTAGU.

Unfortunately, it was I who signed the despatch.

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes. That's the only time I've laughed since I left England.

CAREW.

It was very funny, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, wasn't it? [*All laugh heartily. Then SIR MONTAGU suddenly becomes grave.*] Still, it oughtn't to have happened. [*Rises and lights cigarette. Others rise. BUTLER and FOOTMAN enter and remove the breakfast-table.*] What I mean is, if Carlton asks you pertinent questions, be guarded in your answers. You grasp my meaning?

BAVERSTOCK.

Quite, sir. I have to ensure that he doesn't grasp mine.

SIR MONTAGU.

Exactly. The true public official should be a sort of mental acrobat. You've heard no further rumours of the natives rising?

CAREW.

None, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

Their reception of the new marriage laws is my only difficulty. You see, it's an innovation, and innovation is the yeast by which risings are bred. Come along, Baverstock.

[*Exit L., followed by BAVERSTOCK.*]

CAREW.

[*Left alone.*] As if we wanted to marry! [*Laughs and looks at himself in hand-mirror, twisting moustache and whistling the "British Grenadiers."*] And as if the arrival of a girl and her aunt could affect us! [*Laughs again, stretching himself. Pulls his coat into shape, shoots his cuffs, arranges his tie and exit.*]

A rickshaw, drawn by a NATIVE, appears on the path, stopping at the entrance. STELLA DE GEX steps out of it. She is a pretty, piquant woman of twenty-eight, very vivacious, and dressed in the height of French fashion. She looks a trifle "made up."

STELLA.

[*Opening purse and speaking to NATIVE.*] How much? [*NATIVE holds up two fingers.*] Two what?

NATIVE.

Rupees.

STELLA.

[*To SENTRY.*] That seems a great deal, sentry, doesn't it?

SENTRY.

I ain't allowed to talk, Miss.

STELLA.

So sorry ! [*Giving money to NATIVE.*] Then here are two rupees. So go away, like a good black man. [*Exit NATIVE with rickshaw.*] Now, do I ring the bell ? Yes, I know you can't talk, but you might nod, mightn't you ? [*SENTRY nods.*] Thank you so much. [*Rings bell.*] Such a nice uniform you've got. [*SENTRY smiles and shoulders arms.*] Oh ! you're going to walk, are you ? Quite a nice morning for a little stroll, isn't it ? [*As SENTRY walks off.*] Good morning. [*Enter FOOTMAN with silver tray. He goes to doorway where STELLA is.*] Will you kindly present my card to his Excellency ?

FOOTMAN.

[*Taking card on tray.*] Yes, ma'am.

STELLA.

One moment. I'm not quite sure of his name.

FOOTMAN.

Sir Montagu Martin, ma'am.

STELLA.

[*Amazed.*] Mont—— ! Sir Montagu Martin !

[*Recovering.*] Really? Dear me! [*Exit FOOTMAN.*] Montagu Martin! Surely it can't be Monty—dear old "Mumps," as we used to call him! What a very odd thing!

SIR MONTAGU *enters hurriedly, as if he had forgotten something.*

SIR MONTAGU.

By the way, Carew—— [*Stops dead, seeing STELLA.*

STELLA.

Monty!

SIR MONTAGU.

Stella! You—here!

STELLA.

[*Pleadingly.*] Mumps!

SIR MONTAGU.

You're not to call me Mumps. I—I won't have it.

STELLA.

[*Demurely.*] I'm so sorry, Montagu.

SIR MONTAGU.

What on earth has brought you here? When did you come?

STELLA.

Only this morning. I've just arrived by the English mail. You see, I'm starring round India and Australia with the "Recherché Concert Company," and we're giving a performance *en route*. So I came to ask for the Governor's patronage, never dreaming that you were he. [*Looks round.*] Such a nice house! [*She looks about.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

You mean to tell me you have joined a music-hall company?

STELLA.

Well, yes; but such a very refined one. Nothing short of medium skirts, you know. You don't seem quite pleased to see me, and yet — [*sighing*] — we're cousins.

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, yes, I know; very distant ones. What is your stage-name?

STELLA.

Stella — that's all. I'm professionally known and advertised as "The Evening Star." Pretty idea, isn't

it? Looks so well on programmes — “Vocal Selections by Stella, the Evening Star.”

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes. [*Suddenly.*] I'm particularly busy to-day. Good morning.

STELLA.

Just one moment. This is Monday, we perform on Wednesday, and sail on Thursday. A delightful scheme has occurred to me. Shall I be your guest for the three days?

SIR MONTAGU.

My good woman, I'm a bachelor. It's quite impossible. Were I to invite you here, people would — er — misunderstand me.

STELLA.

Dear me! Your reputation must be rickety. But, don't you see, no one need know my real vocation. Then, as to name — father, you know, though he dropped the title in England, was really the Comte de Gex.

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, he said he was.

STELLA.

Well, that's the same thing in France. So, you see, I style myself Comtesse de Gex in private life, if — if necessary.

SIR MONTAGU.

I'm afraid people here wouldn't swallow that.

STELLA.

I think they would. I'm very easily digested. Come, Montagu, you haven't forgotten the old delightful days in Paris? And then again at Brighton, when you ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, never mind. You hadn't become a variety artist then, and I had no official standing. Really, you must go away. Mr. Carlton with his daughter and sister arrive to-day on a visit, and may be here at any moment.

STELLA.

What, the Colonial Secretary?

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes.

STELLA.

[*Placing her parasol on table and taking off her gloves.*] That decides me. I've an insatiable craving for the society of distinguished people. I insist on being your guest. No, I won't hear a word! I'll stay till Wednesday evening, then slip away in time to perform, and on Thursday the Evening Star will fade from your horizon without a soul being a penny the wiser. There! [*She is leaning over the sofa on which he is seated.*]

CAREW *enters*.

CAREW.

I beg your pardon.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Rising awkwardly.*] I'll — I'll be with you presently.

STELLA.

[*To CAREW.*] One moment! [*To SIR MONTAGU.*] Sir Montagu, present the good-looking young man!

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Annoyed.*] Of course — yes — er — my aide-de-camp, Captain Carew.

STELLA.

So pleased. [*Goes to him and shakes hands.*]
How d'you do? I've just arrived by mail from
England.

CAREW.

Really? On pleasure?

STELLA.

Yes. I'm on tour. [SIR MONTAGU *coughs warn-*
ingly.] Montagu — [*explaining to CAREW*] — we're
cousins, you know — you've omitted my name.

SIR MONTAGU.

Er — the Comtesse de Gex.

STELLA.

Sir Montagu has most kindly insisted on my stay-
ing here. He said for a month; but really I must
be off on Thursday. Now, do give me a nice bright
room with a southern prospect. I dislike exposure
of any sort.

CAREW.

A southern prospect gives you the hot wind.

STELLA.

Oh! but I revel in heat. You remember, Montagu, how we enjoyed ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, yes, I remember.

STELLA.

[*To CAREW.*] The Riviera, you know. It's very good of you, looking after me so thoughtfully. I'm so helpless, you know. Such a nice uniform. I remember I once wore —

SIR MONTAGU.

One moment! You must be warm, Comtesse. Shall I get you tea — coffee?

STELLA.

So good of you. But really I'm quite cool.

CAREW.

[*Producing a card.*] This card was brought me, sir. A lady to see you. It's somewhat vague. "Middle, Stella, the Evening Star."

STELLA.

[*Rises.*] How very odd! [*Takes card from CAREW.*] She was a delightful creature who came out with us. Ah! I see. She gave me her card on leaving the ship, and I've stupidly used it instead of my own. What a charming sobriquet! "The Evening Star." You would admire her, Montagu.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Moodily.*] On the contrary, I shall endeavour to avoid her.

STELLA.

Wicked man! And she's really such a fascinating little woman. You ought to meet her. A pretty idea — the meeting of the Evening Star and the Young Knight. [*Looking at alcove.*] Ah! there's a writing-table. I'll send a line for my goods and chattels. May I?

CAREW.

By all means.

STELLA.

Thank you so much. One must have pretty frocks, even in the tropics, mustn't one?

[*Retires to alcove &c. and writes.*]

CAREW.

I had no idea, sir, that you had foreign relatives.

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh yes, quite a number. So many, that I didn't recall her at first.

CAREW.

She's not the sort of person one would forget.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Taking his arm.*] No, she isn't, is she? My dear Carew, she's thrust herself upon me. She's a distant relative, and I can't deny her hospitality. But I do trust you'll keep her out of the way. You must arrange about a room, and so on. The one at the top of the tower would be suitable, eh?

CAREW.

It's rather a dull sort of place.

SIR MONTAGU.

She'll alter all that — on my honour she will!

[*They retire to verandah and pass out of sight.*]

BAVERSTOCK *enters with an armful of papers. He goes to his table in the alcove, and stands aghast at seeing STELLA. She, not observing him, is disarranging everything on the table in the most casual fashion.*

BAVERSTOCK.

I beg your pardon !

STELLA.

[*Looking up, pleasantly.*] Please don't. Won't you sit down ?

BAVERSTOCK.

Thank you, I should like to. The fact is, I'm particularly busy, and this is my table.

STELLA.

Really ! Such a nice table, and such a good view of the bay. [*She does not move.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Gloomily.*] Your gloves are in the red ink.

STELLA.

So they are ! [*Lifts gloves.*] There. Now, do

you mind holding my parasol and cigarette — er — cardcase? Thank you. [*He takes them sulkily.*] I won't be long. [*She goes on writing.*] I'm staying in the house, you know.

BAVERSTOCK.

Then I presume I am addressing Miss Carlton.

STELLA.

Presumption with a lady is always wrong.

BAVERSTOCK.

Would you mind removing these despatches? I see you've been using them as blotting-paper.

STELLA.

So I have. No wonder I thought it such bad blotting-paper. Now tell me, who are you?

BAVERSTOCK.

I'm Sir Montagu's private secretary. My name is Baverstock.

STELLA.

Such a nice name! So redolent of England. Sounds like a suburban railway station.

BAVERSTOCK.

I'm particularly busy at present, and if ——

STELLA.

If I can help you? Of course I shall. There, I've finished. [*Rises.*] So now, if you'll sit down and write, I'll hold the pens and ink and things. Let us draw the curtains. Come, don't look so shocked. I'm a creature of impulse, you know.

[*She draws the curtains.*]

SIR MONTAGU *and* CAREW *re-enter.*

CAREW.

They're coming, sir.

BUTLER.

[*Entering.*] Mr. Carlton and party have arrived, your Excellency.

Enter MR. CARLTON, followed by MRS. WENTWORTH-BOLINGBROKE. CARLTON is a thin, close-shaven, and careworn man of about fifty. MRS. WENTWORTH-BOLINGBROKE is a handsome, massive woman of forty-eight, very well dressed. She is

ponderous in speech and affected in manner. She uses tortoiseshell eye-glasses with handle.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Shaking hands with CARLTON.*] Let me offer you a very hearty welcome to the Amandaland Islands.

CARLTON.

You're very good. My sister, Mrs. Wentworth-Bolingbroke.

SIR MONTAGU.

How d'you do? Pleasant voyage, I hope?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I believe so. Personally I considered it quite appalling. I dislike extremes meeting, as, for instance, a very small cabin in a very large ocean. A very large cabin in a very small ocean would be so much nicer.

SIR MONTAGU.

True.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Then the view in mid-sea was invariably the same, except that some days it wobbled more than others. [*She sits exhaustedly on sofa.*] Henry, my tabloids.

SIR MONTAGU.

Tabloids ! I trust you are not an invalid.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Oh, no ! but my London physician recommended these against all epidemics in the tropics. I take one every four hours.

CARLTON.

[To CAREW.] Charming bay you have. By the way, what is the population of the Islands ?

CAREW.

[*Hesitates.*] Increasing daily, sir, both black and white.

SIR MONTAGU.

You'll find our climate most salubrious.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I dislike all climates. The only atmosphere I care for is that of my own drawing-room in London, and even there we have black smoke quite frequently.

SIR MONTAGU.

You'll revel in the flowers and fruit.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

You think so? I doubt it.

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah! Well, at least our scenery will interest you.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I dislike all scenery except in a theatre, where the Arctic regions and an Indian jungle are both about sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit. When my brother insists on my taking one of these tours with him I become a chrysalis, existing in a state of profound coma till we sight London. Then again I become a caterpillar.

SIR MONTAGU.

Er — a butterfly?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

No, a caterpillar. I move slowly, and have none of the ephemeral spontaneity of the butterfly.

SIR MONTAGU.

And Miss Carlton — I understood she was with you.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

She'll be here directly. She insisted on leaving the carriage, and with her maid we left her gathering what appeared to me to be scarlet cabbages.

[A peal of laughter from STELLA is heard in the alcove. MRS. BOLINGBROKE rises and looks first at the curtains, then inquiringly at SIR MONTAGU.]

CARLTON.

What delightful childish laughter!

STELLA.

And did I spill his ink? Oh, naughty, naughty that I am!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

You have other visitors?

SIR MONTAGU.

Er—yes—a cousin. The Comtesse de Gex. French, you know.

CARLTON.

Most refreshing! A charming voice!

[The curtains open and STELLA comes down]

arm-in-arm with BAVERSTOCK. She drops his arm on seeing the others and looks down demurely.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Introducing.*] Mrs. Wentworth-Bolingbroke, Mr. Carlton, Comtesse de Gex, Mr. Baverstock, my secretary.

STELLA.

So pleased! [*Takes CARLTON's hand.*] I've so often read about you in leading articles and things. [*Very sweetly.*] And Mrs. Bolingbroke, your—your mother-in-law?

CARLTON.

My sister.

STELLA.

Of course. How stupid of me! You're so like each other.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

A cousin of Sir Montagu's, I think?

STELLA.

Yes. That is all.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I suppose on the Hanbury-Wilton side of the family?

STELLA.

No. The Brackenbury-Todd side.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Ah! I don't seem to know the name.

STELLA.

Possibly not. They go nowhere — except, of course, to Court.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Aside to CARLTON.*] What an astounding person! She's like a drawing in "*La Vie Parisienne*."

CARLTON.

Honoria! *You* read that paper?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I found it in *your* cabin, Henry.

CARLTON.

Extraordinary!

SIR MONTAGU.

No doubt you would like to see your rooms?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Thank you, yes.

SIR MONTAGU.

Then, Carew —— [*CAREW is talking to STELLA and does not hear.*] Carew, will you show the way?

CAREW.

Pleasure, sir. And you, Comtesse ——?

STELLA.

I am with you. I 'm so fond of your uniform. I remember I once wore —— [*SIR MONTAGU coughs warningly.*] But there — I 've forgotten. What an imperfect diary memory is!

[*CAREW opens the door, STELLA sweeps out first, followed by MRS. BOLINGBROKE, who raises her glasses and stares after her. CAREW and BAVERSTOCK follow them.*]

CARLTON.

[*Brushing sleeve.*] Dear me! I 'm covered with

yellow dust. What a charming woman the Comtesse seems !

SIR MONTAGU.

H'm — yes.

CARLTON.

The state of the Islands is satisfactory, I trust ?

SIR MONTAGU.

Very much so. I hope that my administration is giving the Home Government satisfaction ?

CARLTON.

[*Evasively.*] Ah ! [Comes down R. C.]

SIR MONTAGU.

I should be glad of an assurance on that point.

CARLTON.

The Government so far reserves both comment and approval, neither being desirable at the present juncture. Comment, you see, is synonymous with censure, and approval would only imply my wisdom in selecting you as governor. That, I think, is clear.

SIR MONTAGU.

Quite. Then were I censured, such censure would be directed against you?

CARLTON.

Oh no! For my selection of you was based on your good points, and therefore I am only responsible for your creditable achievements. My position is necessarily in the nature of an impregnable rock.

SIR MONTAGU.

Whilst mine would appear to have its foundation on political sand.

CARLTON.

A sandy soil may be cultivated.

SIR MONTAGU.

And a rock may not.

CARLTON.

The rock relies on its grandeur.

SIR MONTAGU.

Still, it's always barren.

CARLTON.

Eh?

SIR MONTAGU.

A mere metaphor.

CARLTON.

Your only difficulty at present, I imagine, is the reorganisation of the native marriage laws?

SIR MONTAGU.

That is so. You see, when England annexed the Islands in the 'twenties, in the interests of Christianity, and with great slaughter, each native was allowed three wives, rajahs thirty — if they could get them. With the advent of Bishop Garraway in '71, these numbers were reduced to natives two wives each, rajahs twelve. The Bishop had evangelistic tendencies. But the Bill about to be brought into operation places the natives' marriage laws on the same footing as our own.

CARLTON.

And this has given rise to considerable feeling?

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes.

CARLTON.

No danger of a rising, I trust?

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh, I think not.

CARLTON.

The former state of affairs was certainly highly immoral.

SIR MONTAGU.

Undoubtedly. Even the rajahs admitted that a change was inevitable.

CARLTON.

They were used to changes, apparently.

ETHEL.

[*Without.*] Father! Father!

CARLTON.

My daughter's voice.

Enter ETHEL CARLTON. *She is a very charming and attractive girl of twenty, in a white yachting*

costume and cap. She carries an armful of tropical flowers.

ETHEL.

Here I am, dad.

CARLTON.

And here is your host.

SIR MONTAGU.

Welcome to the Amandaland Islands. [*From the moment SIR MONTAGU sees ETHEL his eyes follow her everywhere. It is clearly a case of love at first sight.*]

ETHEL.

Ah! and they are so beautiful. The very air breathes a welcome. The sun, the flowers, the fruit, the sea — even the natives. An odour rises from everything.

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, doesn't it? [CARLTON *retires to the verandah.*]

ETHEL.

I shall never tear myself away from all this beauty.

SIR MONTAGU.

I wish — I wish I could believe that.

ETHEL.

Father, shall I make you a buttonhole?

[SIR MONTAGU *seizes his own buttonhole and throws it away.*

CARLTON.

No, thank you, child. I only care for primroses. Make one for Sir Montagu.

ETHEL.

You have one already, haven't you?

SIR MONTAGU.

No. It — er — faded of envy as you came in.

ETHEL.

Then shall I?

SIR MONTAGU.

Do. I'll hold the flowers.

ETHEL.

There! [*She puts flowers in his arms.*] You're like an allegorical figure of Summer.

SIR MONTAGU.

Am I, really?

CARLTON.

[*Looking out at the Bay.*] That, I presume, is the new breakwater?

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Abstractedly.*] Yes — yes. [*To* ETHEL.] And you really mean to enjoy life here?

ETHEL.

Every moment of it. You'll help me, won't you?

CARLTON.

Not the near one, but the far one, eh?

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Repeating mechanically.*] No. Not the near one, but the far one.

ETHEL.

You'll let me gather hundreds and thousands of flowers and fruit, won't you?

CARLTON.

What did it cost?

SIR MONTAGU.

Hundreds and thousands. Everything on the Islands.

CARLTON.

[*Realising that they are not listening.*] Ah!

[*He strolls on to the verandah and disappears.*]

ETHEL.

[*Who has pinned buttonhole in SIR MONTAGU'S coat.*] There! You're quite smart.

SIR MONTAGU.

How shall I thank you?

Enter BAVERSTOCK with papers. From the moment he sees ETHEL his eyes follow her, as in SIR MONTAGU'S case.

BAVERSTOCK.

Papers for your signature, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Annoyed.*] Yes — never mind. Go away! One moment! This is my secretary, Mr. Baverstock. [*The others bow.*] Thank you, that will do. [BAVERSTOCK remains as if entranced.]

ETHEL.

A secretary in such a fairyland ! It seems absurd.

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes, doesn't it ?

ETHEL.

In all this wealth of beauty, however do you manage to write ?

BAVERSTOCK.

Oh ! with pens — J pens !

ETHEL.

It seems so incongruous.

SIR MONTAGU.

We're keeping you. I know you're busy. Go away.

BAVERSTOCK.

I am endeavouring to be pleasant, genial, even amusing — if that is possible. But you wish to be alone, sir ?

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, please.

BAVERSTOCK.

Then, Miss Carlton, since you admire the bay — and for the first time I perceive a certain rich, romantic beauty in it — let me show it you from the garden. Thus, Sir Montagu shall be, as he desires, alone.

ETHEL.

But — you have work?

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, you have work. Go away! [*To* ETHEL, *suavely.*] Come, I'll be your cicerone.

ETHEL.

Ah! thank you. And the aloes — may I see them?

[SIR MONTAGU *goes out triumphantly with* ETHEL. BAVERSTOCK *remains as in a dream, dropping the despatches on the floor without observing it.*

Enter CAREW.

CAREW.

What's all this? [*Seeing papers on the floor.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

It is, as she says, a beautiful view, isn't it? [*Picking up papers.*] It—it certainly is a marvellously beautiful view. She shall see it by moonlight, and I'll be showman, if there is a moon.

CAREW.

What on earth are you talking about?

BAVERSTOCK.

I don't know, I don't feel quite normal. By Jove! it's—no, it couldn't be the aloes. Carew, do you believe it possible that one could come under the influence of vegetable life?

CAREW.

As a boy I've been under the influence of an unripe apple. What do you mean?

BAVERSTOCK.

Mean? I've no idea. Tell me—is there a moon to-night?

CAREW.

Yes. Why?

BAVERSTOCK.

Nothing. But it makes all the difference. She has come.

CAREW.

Who? Miss Carlton?

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes. Ethel has come.

CAREW.

Ethel has come!

BAVERSTOCK.

I don't think you ought to call her Ethel.

CAREW.

But you did yourself, my dear fellow.

BAVERSTOCK.

I've met her, you haven't.

CAREW.

Is she attractive?

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Enthusiastically.*] Attractive? She's perfectly —

[*With a sudden change of manner.*] She abhors military men.

CAREW.

She told you that ?

BAVERSTOCK.

No. But I saw it in her eye. [SIR MONTAGU and ETHEL, *much preoccupied*, are seen walking up and down the path at intervals during the following.] Ha ! There she is.

CAREW.

[*Looking through doorway.*] By Jove ! she is a beautiful girl !

BAVERSTOCK.

She's divine, absolutely divine !

CAREW.

I say, we didn't bargain for this.

BAVERSTOCK.

For what ? Bargain for what ?

CAREW.

For such a vision of beauty.

BAVERSTOCK.

You don't mean to say she's upset you?

CAREW.

Upset me? No. [*Going.*] I'm off to make her acquaintance.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Catching hold of him.*] My dear Carew, don't. Remain normal while you can. Hush! There they are again. Look at Sir Montagu. Don't you see what it means? Look at his face — his eyes. He's in love at first sight.

CAREW.

Bah! There's no such thing. [*With enthusiasm*] But she's glorious all the same. She's divine!

BAVERSTOCK.

I wish you'd stop saying that. It's my opinion. I hit on it first.

CAREW.

An opinion may be held by two or more.

BAVERSTOCK.

Possibly. But a divine creature like Ethel can't. Carew, it seems monstrous — mad, if you like — but — I love her! Oh! I know *you* can't understand such a thing.

CAREW.

How do you know that I can't understand such a thing? How do you know that I'm not experiencing the same sort of feeling at the present moment?

BAVERSTOCK.

How? Because I claim the sole right to this emotion. It is mine. I got it first.

CAREW.

You can't claim an emotion if it's here.

[*Strikes his breast.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

Carew, I will share my last crust with you, if you care for crusts, but not — not Ethel.

CAREW.

[*Suddenly sitting down.*] I should think not!

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Also sitting.*] Exactly. Let us calm down a bit. One thing, Carew, is clear. Sir Montagu said he was so wrapped in his duty to the State that, were a woman to unwrap him ——

CAREW.

He'd die of an official chill. Yes.

BAVERSTOCK.

We ought to save him. [*They clasp hands.*]

CAREW.

The thing is how to begin.

BAVERSTOCK.

Never leave her side, day or evening.

CAREW.

What? Both of us?

BAVERSTOCK.

Or turn about.

CAREW.

Then I'll start at once.

BAVERSTOCK.

There is no time like the present.

[*They go out hurriedly, almost knocking against*
CARLTON, *who enters from the verandah.*

CARLTON.

Have you seen my daughter?

CAREW.

Yes, thanks.

BAVERSTOCK.

Oh, dear me, yes! [*They rush out.*

CARLTON.

[*Looking after CAREW and BAVERSTOCK.*] There is an air of business about these young men. [*Examining a Marron glacé in his hand.*] A Marron glacé! that struck my hat! Somehow it suggests the little Comtesse. She's a cheery little person, unconventional, unrestrained. I foresee a pleasant time in these delightful Islands.

STELLA *enters.*

STELLA.

Ah! [*Pointing a finger at him.*] I watched you come in.

CARLTON.

I am honoured.

STELLA.

They've put me in a room in a tower—like a fairy princess, you know—and I looked out and saw you amongst the aloes below, for all the world like a fairy prince, and ——

CARLTON.

[*Deprecatingly.*] Oh! come, my good lady ——

STELLA.

But you were, really. Of course I only saw the top of your hat, I couldn't see your feet. Well, I dropped a Marron glacé—the one that landed on your head with such a thump. You're not angry, are you?

CARLTON.

Why, of course not.

STELLA.

That's my little way, you know. An innocent, practical joke, and we're friends at once. Isn't everything here beautiful? It's quite a fairyland. I expect cupids to come flying by every moment.

But, of course, Cupid doesn't interest you. He never creeps into Parliament, does he?

CARLTON.

Why not? Even a politician is human.

STELLA.

Really? That seems to have escaped the newspaper reporters. I wish I were mixed up in politics, but I'm afraid my love of romance is too strong.

CARLTON.

Romancing and politics go hand in hand at times.

STELLA.

But surely you have no romantic tendencies?

CARLTON.

You're quite severe. I think I have — at certain seasons.

STELLA.

Ah! This is September. In — in autumn?

CARLTON.

H'm! Why do you ask?

STELLA.

I thought of the lines, "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of ——"

CARLTON.

Yes, I remember.

STELLA.

[*Looking down.*] Of — of — love.

CARLTON.

I see. And you logically conclude that the autumn is a suitable season for an old man's folly. Love, Comtesse, is like climbing for an apple, the honeymoon's the eating of it, and the rest is the discovery that you prefer almost every other kind of fruit.

STELLA.

Is it really? I've so little knowledge of the world, you know.

CARLTON.

Yes, I see that.

STELLA.

My ideas must seem to you so crude, so childishly innocent, so ——

CARLTON.

Eh?

STELLA.

Childishly innocent. Don't you think so?

CARLTON.

I think you depreciate some very obvious gifts.
[Sits by her.]

STELLA.

Gifts! What gifts? I have none — not even love, and love is the artist that colours life.

CARLTON.

Then I fear he's an impressionist. Lavish in paint and distinctly French.

STELLA.

[With affected bitterness.] Ah! cruel! You mean that to — to — — [Affecting to break down.]

CARLTON.

[Surprised.] Dear lady, to what?

STELLA.

To apply to me. Because I'm F — French. I — don't paint — I — —

CARLTON.

No, no! You mistake me. I was talking of love, of Cupid, of — [*enter* MRS. BOLINGBROKE] — of — oh ——! [*Seeing* MRS. BOLINGBROKE.] •

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Severely.*] I've been looking for you, Henry.

STELLA.

[*Instantly recovering herself.*] He's been telling me such a sad story — at least, not really a sad story, because it didn't happen. It was about his plans for you in case of *The Butterfly* being shipwrecked. You were to be tied to a lifebuoy, then, hand-in-hand, you were to leap from the sinking ship to a boat, and ——

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I never leap.

STELLA.

No. I said you would have more consideration for the boat.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

It seems to have been a most uncalled-for conversation, and scarcely an agreeable topic.

STELLA.

No! Still you *are* his sister.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Isn't that rather gratuitous information? I've been so for ——

STELLA.

For ages. Of course — but I'm so stupid. [*Turning.*] Ah! here's Sir Montagu.

Enter SIR MONTAGU *and* ETHEL, *followed by*
CAREW *and* BAVERSTOCK.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Aside to* CARLTON.] Henry, that woman is preposterous and impossible.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Aside and irritably to staff.*] Understand me, gentlemen; when I am entertaining my guests, I will not submit to being followed by my staff.

CAREW.

We were merely endeavouring to assist you, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

By being "pleasant, genial, even amusing, if ——"

SIR MONTAGU.

That will do. Your assistance was a hindrance.

BAVERSTOCK.

That's a paradox, isn't it?

SIR MONTAGU.

Paradox be — [*Aside.*] Ha! I know. I'll get rid of them. [*Loud.*] Carew, Baverstock, it's occurred to me that I should like the General to lunch here to-day. Will one of you — or, better still, both of you — convey my invitation?

BAVERSTOCK.

Certainly, sir.

CAREW.

Yes, sir. [*Neither move.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

At once, please.

CAREW.

By all means, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

There is no time like the present.

[Still neither move, their eyes following ETHEL.]

ETHEL.

May I go with you? I do so want to see the country.

[A general alacrity ensues. CAREW and BAVERSTOCK get their hats.]

BAVERSTOCK.

With the utmost pleasure.

STELLA.

And I? I'm so fond of Generals! I admire their uniform so much!

CAREW.

You shall come. Mr. Baverstock will escort you.

[CAREW and ETHEL, STELLA and BAVERSTOCK pass out to verandah.]

CARLTON.

I should enjoy a stroll myself.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Ah! Then I think I shall chaperone the party.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Irritably.*] Let's all go — in a swarm!

[*They all disappear. The SENTRY presents arms as they pass.*

Presently ETHEL returns, followed by CAREW.

ETHEL.

So stupid of me to forget it! Ah! there it is.

[*Takes up parasol from table and turns to go.*

CAREW.

But you don't really want to see the country, do you?

ETHEL.

Not a bit — with so many other people.

CAREW.

And it's cooler here.

[*He places two chairs side by side, and they sit down with their backs to the doorway.*

SIR MONTAGU *re-enters and stands behind them.*

ETHEL.

Tell me, is Sir Montagu rather an impressionable man?

SIR MONTAGU.

No, not as a rule.

[*They turn round surprised. BAVERSTOCK is seen entering stealthily.*

ETHEL.

I — I thought you'd gone to the General's?

SIR MONTAGU.

Baverstock is conveying my invitation.

[*On this BAVERSTOCK turns and goes on tiptoe. The SENTRY is smiling broadly. The others turn and catch sight of BAVERSTOCK as he disappears.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT

Scene:—As in Act I., except that it is evening. Brilliant tropical moonlight without. The room is lighted by shaded lamps.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE and ETHEL have just left the dining room after dinner.

ETHEL.

What a heavenly night!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Quite beautiful. [*Enter NATIVE SERVANTS, carrying tray with coffee.*] Ah! and here is coffee. Where is the Comtesse?

ETHEL.

She's playing the piano. I'll call her, shall I? Comtesse!

STELLA.

[*Entering.*] Yes? Ah, here's coffee! Shall I give you a cup, Mrs. Bolingbroke?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Coldly.*] Thanks, no. I must have air.

[*She retires to the verandah.*]

STELLA.

[*Seating herself on sofa and drinking coffee.*] It's so necessary, isn't it? Well, Miss Carlton, it seems you've made a conquest of the entire household.

ETHEL.

I? A conquest?

STELLA.

You were sitting opposite Mr. Baverstock at dinner, and his eyes never left you. And when you spoke to Captain Carew, his mind became a blank. I know it, for, as a test, I handed him mustard when he was eating mutton. He took quite a large spoonful. You must have noticed such very marked attention.

ETHEL.

It's quite true that wherever I go they seem to

spring up from somewhere. Mr. Baverstock scarcely left me all day until he trod on a prickly pear, and then Captain Carew appeared.

STELLA.

So I saw.

ETHEL.

You saw him?

STELLA.

I was sitting in the tower with your father, discussing politics. I'm so fond of politics!

ETHEL.

In the tower with father?

STELLA.

Not in my room, you know; on the roof. And I saw Captain Carew take your hand. The view from the roof is delightful.

ETHEL.

I—I remember. I had plucked a rose, and——

STELLA.

Yes, I know. A thorn had stuck in your hand

That's a favorite beginning of my own. It's so effective.

ETHEL.

Effective ?

STELLA.

Yes. Another useful opening is the shoelace coming undone. But that's after a day or two's acquaintance.

ETHEL.

But I'd never dream of wilfully setting such traps for men.

STELLA.

No, not at your age. Later on you will find them very serviceable. Wait till you get your first wrinkle. Wrinkles; you know, dear, are the diary of a woman's life in cipher.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Coming down to* ETHEL.] You seem very thoughtful, child. Dreaming of home ?

ETHEL.

Dreaming ! No ; on the contrary, Comtesse de Gex has been opening my eyes.

STELLA.

Merely sketching the manœuvres preliminary to becoming a great lady.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

The "great lady," I fear, is a memory of the past. One rarely meets her nowadays.

STELLA.

Very rarely. Indeed, I *never* meet her.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

So I should imagine. After all, the Duchess of to-day is quite an ordinary person, inordinately advertised. The characteristic of rank that I admire most is its devotion to soap and water, though that, of course, oughtn't to justify hereditary legislation.

STELLA.

I suppose not! Are these Mr. Carlton's views?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

No. I believe my brother regards the Constitution as quite robust. Indeed, he's an ardent student of

the constitutional literature of Society — Debrett, the Cookery Book, and Stock Exchange quotations. He may possibly accept a peerage 'himself.

STELLA.

[*Tentatively.*] And then, I suppose, he'll marry again? Indeed, he has even discussed the possibility with — with me.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Really? [*Rising.*] An infelicitous choice of subject. I will do my brother the justice, however, to assure you that, were he to marry again, his selection would be an extremely dignified person with a great deal of money.

STELLA.

Money would be a *sine quâ non*? And I, in my foolish ignorance, always regarded the heart as a jewel-box that only love could unlock!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Money is a wonderful skeleton-key.

ETHEL.

Listen, Aunt! A nightingale!

[MRS. BOLINGBROKE *and* STELLA *move to doorway.*

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Exquisite! How still the air is! 'The Sentry is the only restless note.

[*The SENTRY is marching up and down.*

STELLA.

Don't you like him? I'll tell him to stop. Sentry, please!

SENTRY.

Yes, miss.

STELLA.

Would you mind standing at ease? You're getting on our nerves.

SENTRY.

I ain't, miss; I'm on my beat.

STELLA.

Please don't argue, Sentry. You're not allowed to talk, you know. Stand at ease like a nice quiet soldier. [SENTRY *walks off.*] There! he's gone off in a huff.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

The nightingale again ! Let us hear his song in the garden.

STELLA.

[*As they move out.*] Yes, I'm so fond of nightingales. The moon and love and stars, and spring nights and things, all seem mixed up in the "jug-jug," don't they.

[*Exeunt* MRS. BOLINGBROKE and STELLA.

ETHEL.

[*Who has come down and is examining photograph which she has taken from a table.*] How like him ! And that's his signature, I suppose—"Charles Carew." Perhaps some girl loves him. I wonder ! I never felt so interested in any one before. Strange ! for it's not as if he were a brother.

Enter CAREW. *He now wears the evening dress of a Governor's Staff. As he enters, ETHEL conceals photograph.*

CAREW.

Alone, Miss Carlton ?

ETHEL.

Yes. [*Drops photograph. Both stoop for it hurriedly, and CAREW secures it.*]

CAREW.

Why, it's myself.

ETHEL.

Is it, really? So it is! [*Changing the subject.*]
Where—where are the others?

CAREW.

Playing billiards. Do you care for the game?

ETHEL.

Oh! yes, I like all games.

[*A piano being played is heard in the distance.*]

CAREW.

So do I. Who's that?

ETHEL.

Probably the Comtesse. Shall we join her?

CAREW.

No, no! We should only be disturbing her; and besides, there's a game — er — rather a good one — I used to know, called "Match-making." Do you know it?

ETHEL.

Match-making? No. I've never played at that. But perhaps you can teach me.

CAREW.

I'll try, with pleasure. You see, we each take paper and pencil, and sit opposite each other. There. Now we're supposed to be writing a scene between two lovers in a novel. I write for him, and you for her. [*As he speaks they sit at a table opposite each other, and CAREW produces pencils and paper.*]

ETHEL.

I see.

CAREW.

Well, now, I am in love with you — with her.

ETHEL.

And — and am I in love with you — with him?

CAREW.

Yes, I think so. Oh yes, certainly !

ETHEL.

I suppose I ought to be.

CAREW.

And we toss for who begins. [*Tosses coin.*] Head or tail?

ETHEL.

Head.

CAREW.

It's a tail, so I begin. You're quite ready?

ETHEL.

Yes.

CAREW.

Very well. I write. "My own Ethel ——"

ETHEL.

[*Rising.*] Captain Carew !

CAREW.

[*Rises.*] That's her name in the novel, you know.

ETHEL.

[*Laughing and sitting again.*] Oh! I beg your pardon. You see, it's mine too.

CAREW.

It's a nice name. I always liked it. However, I'd better get on. "My own Ethel, ever since you landed on these Islands ——"

ETHEL.

Am I on the Islands? — I mean, is she?

CAREW.

Yes, for I can choose the scene if I win the toss. That's a rule of the game.

ETHEL.

I see. I didn't know.

CAREW.

"I have loved you passionately." Now it's your turn. You reply for her.

ETHEL.

Yes. It's rather difficult.

CAREW.

Remember, you love him.

ETHEL.

I remember. I think she had better reply,
"What is your income?"

CAREW.

Ah! you can't say that. It's against the rules.

ETHEL.

Is it? Well, she says, "Why do you love me?"

CAREW.

I say, "Because you are beautiful and good."

ETHEL.

No. *He* says that.

CAREW.

Yes. But I'm him.

ETHEL.

It's rather a confusing game.

CAREW.

Only at first.

ETHEL.

What did he say last?

CAREW.

"You are good and beautiful."

ETHEL.

Oh, yes. And she answers, "I am sorry I cannot truthfully say the same of you." Now it's your turn.

CAREW.

He, undaunted, remarks, "Do you think you could ever care for me?"

ETHEL.

And she, being good-natured, says, "I might try."

CAREW.

Ah! That's better. You're getting into the game.

ETHEL.

Indeed I'm not. She only said that to gain time.

CAREW.

Anyway, he comes to her — [*rises*] — clasps her hand, and that brings us to the first illustration.

ETHEL.

You never told me it was an illustrated novel.

CAREW.

Oh, yes! That's one of the rules. We don't draw. We do it by a sort of *tableau vivant*.

ETHEL.

It's a very embarrassing game. There are so many rules.

CAREW.

Now, before the illustration, we toss again. If it's heads, he embraces her; if it's tails, she embraces him.

ETHEL.

Then what's the good of tossing?

CAREW.

It's a rule, that's all. Shall I toss?

ETHEL.

One moment! [*Retires behind sofa.*] Now you may.

CAREW.

Right. [*Tosses.*] It's a tail.

ETHEL.

[*Indignantly.*] Well, I'm not going to. There! It's a preposterous game, and I don't see where it's to end. I believe you invented it.

CAREW.

To be honest, Miss Carlton, I did. I wanted neither of us to lose, and love's the only game I know of where both players can win. I meant every word I said.

ETHEL.

Captain Carew!

CAREW.

It's true, Ethel, I ——

ETHEL.

Hush! There's some one coming. I — I ——

CAREW.

[*Eagerly.*] Yes?

ETHEL.

I — I — I may have meant it too.

CAREW.

Ah!

ETHEL.

I'm not sure. If, when you see me next, I wear a white rose — Hush!

Enter BAVERSTOCK in Staff evening dress.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Gloomily.*] As I thought! [*To CAREW.*] Sir Montagu wants you in the billiard-room.

CAREW.

My dear fellow, I'm busy. Say you couldn't find me.

BAVERSTOCK.

No, Carew. Like George Washington, I cannot tell a lie.

ETHEL.

Possibly George Washington never tried.

BAVERSTOCK.

That is not my case. Constant detection in the past forms the basis of my present moral code.

CAREW.

Then, Miss Carlton, will you excuse me?

ETHEL.

Yes, of course.

CAREW.

Then come along, Baverstock.

BAVERSTOCK.

Thanks. I shall remain here.

CAREW.

[*Laughing as he goes off.*] There's an old proverb,
"Absence makes the heart grow fonder ——"

BAVERSTOCK.

Of others that are left behind. Yes. [*Exit CAREW.*]

[*To* *ETHEL.*] Tell me, did you hear a nightingale in the garden?

ETHEL.

Yes, singing divinely.

BAVERSTOCK.

It was I!

ETHEL.

You?

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes. I possess a toy of childhood which, when blown in a glass of water, reproduces with wonderful fidelity the voice of the nightingale. My scheme was to lure you into the garden.

ETHEL.

Mr. Baverstock!

BAVERSTOCK.

Miss Carlton, there's something in the air to-night. I have a presentiment of impending disaster.

ETHEL.

Then you are superstitious?

BAVERSTOCK.

Very. [*With sudden inspiration.*] May I read your hand?

ETHEL.

Do. I should like it of all things. [*He takes her hand and gazes earnestly at it.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

I perceive that you have recently made a voyage from England to distant lands.

ETHEL.

Yes; but you knew that.

BAVERSTOCK.

Still, if it's in your hand, I can't help seeing it, can I?

ETHEL.

I suppose not.

BAVERSTOCK.

I note that you are extremely attractive.

ETHEL.

From my hand?

BAVERSTOCK.

Er — yes. It's a beautiful hand, so white and soft! When I clasp it, I seem to forget, the past drifts away, and I am borne on white wings to—to — somewhere.

ETHEL.

That sounds more like telling your own fortune than mine.

BAVERSTOCK.

'True. I'll go on. This line crossing that tells me your name is Ethel. [*Meditatively.*] Strange! How strange!

ETHEL.

It isn't at all strange. My name is Ethel.

BAVERSTOCK.

I know. But look at my hand. D'you mind holding it? [*She sits by him on sofa and takes his hand.*] Thank you. You see this line? [*Pointing to line on his own hand.*]

ETHEL.

Yes.

BAVERSTOCK.

That means that I shall marry an Ethel.

ETHEL.

All this is curiously like a game I've been playing with Captain Carew.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Annoyed.*] Carew! Your hand tells me you abhor all military men.

ETHEL.

Then it's wrong.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Rising excitedly.*] Good heavens! What is this extraordinary military magnetism? A cavalry officer is merely a highly-coloured head-groom, an infantry officer a tutor in a school of red-coated boys!

ETHEL.

One might imagine you were jealous.

BAVERSTOCK.

Of Carew! [*Turns precipitately.*] That's just what

I am. For, Ethel [*fumbling for his notes*] — I love you! [ETHEL *rises*.] No! [*As she makes a movement to go*.] I insist on your hearing me. It is your duty, as a beautiful and good woman, to listen to any proposal that may be going. That is your province, your mission, your *raison d'être*. Excuse my referring to notes. My official training has made me largely dependent on them. [*Glances at notes at intervals*.] I confess that my present state of mind staggers me. For years I have been like a safety-match, but in you I have found the box. For years I have lived in a mental perspiration of ink — but that is over. [ETHEL *is about to sit*.] Ah! take care, there is a teacup on that chair. Allow me. [*He removes cup*.] I have nothing to offer you but a great, unselfish love. I have no means, few attractions, but I *am* an English gentleman.

ETHEL.

Yes. But there are so many others.

BAVERSTOCK.

Then let me shield you from their importunities. Ethel, I am knocking at the door of your heart.

ETHEL.

There is no admittance except on business.

BAVERSTOCK.

I wish to acquire a life lease of the entire property.

ETHEL.

My heart has no need of a tenant at present.

BAVERSTOCK.

Then you're losing a valuable rent.

Enter CAREW.

CAREW.

I'm afraid I'm in the way.

BAVERSTOCK.

You are.

CAREW.

I think I ought to tell you that Sir Montagu explained to me that it was you who suggested that I should play.

BAVERSTOCK.

I believe I did.

CAREW.

Then how about Washington ?

BAVERSTOCK.

My dear Carew, I use George Washington as a convenience, not as an obstacle. We're very busy. Would you mind leaving us?

CAREW.

[*To* ETHEL.] Do you wish me to leave the room?

ETHEL.

I wish you to stay.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Rises.*] Then the situation is impossible. We're at a deadlock.

CAREW.

I feel sure. Baverstock, this is most painful to Miss Carlton.

ETHEL.

I — I can go to the garden.

BAVERSTOCK.

A good idea! Allow me to accompany you.

SIR MONTAGU *enters unseen, and stands watching them.*

CAREW.

Stop! I will not permit this persecution of one who is our guest.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Aside.*] Our guest!

BAVERSTOCK.

Persecution! [*Fumbling for notes.*] Is the love of an honest heart persecution? Is my life to be relegated to the limbo of a loveless future? Is — am I — hang it! — where *are* my notes?

SIR MONTAGU.

Gentlemen! What does this mean? Wrangling in the presence of a lady!

ETHEL.

Really, it's nothing.

CAREW.

The fact is, sir, when I returned here —

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes, he was here before.

CAREW.

I found that Mr. Baverstock had — well —

BAVERSTOCK.

There is no necessity for evading the truth. George Washington found none, nor do I. I had suggested to Miss Carlton what seemed to me a happy alliance with myself.

SIR MONTAGU.

And in doing so expressly disregarded my injunctions.

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes, sir, but only because I discovered that true love knows no restrictions. [*Referring to notes.*] It grows and expands, no matter how arid the soil, how official the environment. It demands a resignation of —

SIR MONTAGU.

Your resignation will be considered later. Meantime be good enough to leave the room.

BAVERSTOCK.

Since you desire it, sir. [*Going.*] I need hardly

say, Miss Carlton, that I leave my heart behind me. It is a moral untidiness that I cannot help. There are my notes — [*laying them on the table*] — if you care to glance at them. They contain an epitome of my unalterable affections, selected from such of the best authors as I have been able to procure in in these remote Islands. [*He goes out dejectedly.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

And you, Carew?

CAREW.

Well, sir, I admit I ——

SIR MONTAGU.

In any case, I think it desirable that you too should leave us.

CAREW.

As you please, sir.

[*He goes out indignantly.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

Let me offer you the most humble apology for the inexplicable conduct of my staff.

ETHEL.

Let us forget it.

SIR MONTAGU.

I take it they both — er — offered — er —

ETHEL.

Yes. They did.

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah! And your answer was ——?

ETHEL.

I said nothing definitely. You see, they interrupted each other, and then you came in.

SIR MONTAGU.

I am pained beyond expression that this should have happened.

ETHEL.

Yes, twice in one evening.

SIR MONTAGU.

Twice?

ETHEL.

Once each. Twice altogether.

SIR MONTAGU.

If I could hope to efface the memory of these indignities I should be more than gratified. I had given them both imperative instructions that they were not to cultivate any potentially matrimonial emotion, least of all one that should run counter to my own.

ETHEL.

They probably meant nothing.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Warmly.*] Then the more unjustifiable their conduct. With such a face as yours to inspire them, with your voice lingering in their ears, and your presence giving a charm to all that is beautiful in life — that they should mean nothing! Ah! I could read them a lesson.

[*Is about to sit.*]

ETHEL.

Ah! take care! There's a teacup on that chair.

[*Removes it to table.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

A lesson indeed ! For woman is never won by the untutored arrogance of a premature and probably visionary passion. She yields only to the self-surrender of one who will sacrifice all for her, who would make her life a day-dream in these Islands, who ——

ETHEL.

You know — I think, if it happened three times, I should have to speak to papa.

SIR MONTAGU.

Have no fear. I will ensure that they don't repeat their offence.

ETHEL.

It wasn't that. I thought that ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah ! You thought the tone of my apology a trifle too impassioned. Perhaps, in natural indignation, I was somewhat at sea.

ETHEL.

You seem to be getting into the same boat with the others.

SIR MONTAGU.

No, no! Their boat has foundered. And I — I have only just set sail.

Enter STELLA.

STELLA.

What a calm, tranquil evening we're having!

ETHEL.

[*Doubtfully.*] Yes.

[*She goes out by the verandah.*]

STELLA.

So tropical.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Annoyed.*] Quite, isn't it?

STELLA.

It reminds me of the song, "Hast thou forgotten, love, so soon, that night, that lovely night in June." Only this is September, and love-songs have died out. Sometimes I think love itself will die.

SIR MONTAGU.

That is not my experience.

STELLA.

No. You were always an optimist in these matters. [*Looks around and finds that ETHEL has gone.*] Ah! She's gone, Monty!

SIR MONTAGU.

Hush!

STELLA.

Mont — agu, I think Mr. Carlton is going to — to ask me to —

SIR MONTAGU.

Good heavens! To what?

STELLA.

To marry him!

SIR MONTAGU.

Stella!

STELLA.

On my honour I shall refuse him. I haven't led

him on. But to-day in the garden I plucked a rose and a thorn stuck in my hand. Look! There's the mark. Well, he got it out after some pressure. Then presently my shoelace came undone, and that took a quarter of an hour to tie. Then I stupidly dropped my handkerchief, and he — he won't give it back.

SIR MONTAGU.

Stella de Gex! You are slowly, I may say rapidly, accomplishing my official ruin.

STELLA.

Indeed — indeed, I'm not. Besides, Mrs. Bolingbroke says he'll only marry a very rich woman, and I'm not that. I've nothing but a few nice frocks and hats and things.

SIR MONTAGU.

Stella, for the sake of old memories —

CARLTON.

[*Without.*] Where is the Comtesse?

STELLA.

Hush! Here he is. You may trust me. I shan't give him a word of encouragement.

Enter CARLTON. He does not see SIR MONTAGU.

CARLTON.

So, Comtesse, at last we are alone. [SIR MONTAGU coughs warningly, and CARLTON looks round.] Ah, Sir Montagu! How did the rajahs take the news of the reorganisation?

SIR MONTAGU.

Er — with reserve. By noon to-day they were to proclaim the new laws to their people. I think, had feeling been stirred, we should have heard of it by now.

CARLTON.

Yes, probably.

[ETHEL is seen outside by SIR MONTAGU. *He joins her, and they walk off.*]

STELLA.

So you've been deserting me all the evening?

CARLTON.

It is wise to keep out of danger.

STELLA.

But surely all old heroes — I should say “heroes of old” — pined for the life of peril, not of safety. Remember, a woman adores valour, artless and shrinking though she be.

CARLTON.

“Shrinking” has not been in evidence.

STELLA.

One may shrink inwardly, like — like a walnut.

CARLTON.

An outsider could scarcely perceive the process without the aid of the Röntgen rays.

STELLA.

[*Rises.*] I must ask you not to touch on what I consider a scientific indelicacy. Surely one's inner mechanism should be sacred. There is such a thing as propriety.

CARLTON.

Propriety is a curtain we all peer behind. Its charm lies in our knowledge of what it conceals.

Enter SIR MONTAGU excitedly, followed by MRS. BOLINGBROKE and ETHEL.

SIR MONTAGU.

There's a horseman dashing up the drive at a gallop!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

He's a soldier. I saw a scabbard flash in the moonlight.

CARLTON.

Strange, at this late hour.

ETHEL.

He's here, and reining up.

SIR MONTAGU.

Why, it's Rivers, of the Midland Fusiliers. [*He leads in CAPTAIN RIVERS, who is dressed in khaki uniform, brown belts, &c., puttees and spurs. He is very*

exhausted, and splashed all over with mud. He can scarcely speak.] Well, Rivers? Come, my dear fellow! What has happened?

Enter CAREW and BAVERSTOCK anxiously.

RIVERS.

I've galloped, sir, from the fort to tell you. The natives have risen!

ALL.

[In horror.] The natives have risen!

RIVERS.

I never reined till —— *[Staggering.]* Quick! Wine or brandy; I'm spent.

SIR MONTAGU.

Bless my soul! He's not wounded, is he?

STELLA.

Here's a cup of coffee in the meantime. D'you take sugar and cream?

RIVERS.

Anything — either — both!

SIR MONTAGU.

Then you've been attacked on the way?

RIVERS.

No, not that. The night is dark, and I didn't see that your iron gate was closed. I galloped full against it.

Enter CAREW with brandy.

SIR MONTAGU.

My poor fellow! Ah! here's the brandy.

RIVERS.

[*Drinking.*] A thousand thanks! At sunset the natives were seen gathering in masses on the Palm Tree Hills; the troops were called out an hour ago, and are marching to meet them. It is said this house is the object of their attack, and I've come with a hundred men to defend it for you. They'll be here at any moment.

CARLTON.

The enemy?

RIVERS.

No, the men. I passed them on the way. I'm dead beat. I'll be all right presently. I never galloped as I've galloped to-night.

SIR MONTAGU.

Rest a moment, Rivers. Give him more brandy.

[*The others close round RIVERS and attend to him.*]

CARLTON.

[*To SIR MONTAGU.*] Do you realise the false position in which I'm placed by this rising?

SIR MONTAGU.

I do, fully. You ought to be in Downing Street.

CARLTON.

Of course! There I can compel attitudes in others, here I must adopt one of my own, the very last resource of the statesman. Besides, I'm travelling for my health. You are of opinion that the garrison is sufficiently strong to repress this rising?

SIR MONTAGU.

I am.

CARLTON.

Then let us hold out. I shall be a disappointment to Exeter Hall, but that can't be helped. Get us out of this difficulty, and your elevation to the peerage is practically assured.

STELLA.

[*To RIVERS.*] Can I bathe your wounds?

RIVERS.

Thanks, no. They're mere scratches.

STELLA.

I'm so sorry. And your nice uniform all spoilt! Are we in much danger?

RIVERS.

Possibly.

LADIES.

Oh!

RIVERS.

I hope not. I'm better now. The General has left a clerk at the Headquarters' Office, who will be in constant communication with you. You have telephonic connection, I think?

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, yes ! [*Pointing to telephone.*] It's here.

RIVERS.

He'll ring you up at intervals and report.

STELLA.

May I take the poker, Montagu ?

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh ! don't worry, at such a moment.

STELLA.

I must have something, you know. I've never been in a battle before, and I can't meet the enemy with a parasol. [*She takes poker.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

Will the ladies be good enough to retire to their rooms ?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I cannot consent to go until I know to what extent

I am in danger. Ethel, child, hand me the tongs.
And I should like a clergyman sent for at once.

CARLTON.

Impossible, Honoria. There is no time.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I insist on it. The late General Bolingbroke always said, "When in danger, summon the nearest clergyman."

STELLA.

And I refuse to go to my room in the tower. Perched up there, with bombshells and cannons falling round me! No, thank you!

[A sound of men marching is heard.]

RIVERS.

Ah! here are the men.

OFFICER.

[Without.] Halt! Front! Stand at ease!

[A number of men are seen to halt in the verandah. They wear ordinary infantry uniform with white helmets.]

STELLA.

[*To RIVERS.*] Please ask them not to stand at ease when we're in such danger.

RIVERS.

[*To SIR MONTAGU.*] I think, sir, if you and Carew will show me over the grounds, I'll dispose my men at once.

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes, by all means. We'll point out everything.

RIVERS.

[*Goes to verandah.*] Then I'll march off, sir. Attention! Shoulder arms! Quick march!

[*Exit RIVERS and Soldiers.*]

STELLA.

It's most unfortunate that I've never made a will.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

No one is so unreasonable as a man!

ETHEL.

We can't do any good by talking, Aunt; we ought ——

} *All
talking
at the
same time
excitedly.*

SIR MONTAGU.

I beseech you, ladies, be calm! If we come to close quarters, I'll ensure your safety. I can conceal you in the coal cellar.

STELLA.

I go to no coal cellar in this. Why, I've only worn it twice!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I have no desire to give trouble, but a more suitable fortress would be the wine cellar.

SIR MONTAGU.

Well, well, we'll see. Perhaps, Carlton, you won't mind examining the cellars and deciding. Baverstock will take you. Come along, Carew! [*He goes out.*]

CAREW.

Coming, sir. [*Aside to ETHEL.*] It's all right, Ethel. Cheer up! It's glorious to take up arms for you, darling! [*Exit CAREW hurriedly.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Advancing to ETHEL.*] As a signal to you that

there is no immediate danger, I shall blow my nightingale at intervals in the garden. And when the hour of danger comes, you will find me in——

CARLTON.

[*Who is waiting at door.*] The cellars! Mr. Baverstock!

BAVERSTOCK.

Coming, sir.

[CARLTON and BAVERSTOCK go out.

STELLA.

They've left us all alone. We must do something. I'll ask the Sentry. [*Goes to doorway.*] Sentry, please? Are you there? No, he's gone too.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I think we might erect a barricade somewhere.

STELLA.

A capital idea! How clever you are, Mrs. Bolingbroke! Let's barricade something. Shall we do the door?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

'The door will do to begin with. Ethel, assist me with the table. [*Aside to ETHEL.*] It's unfortunate having to form a triple alliance with this odious woman.

ETHEL.

But, Aunt, ought we to do this without asking?

[*They are now busily engaged in piling up tables, &c., in front of doorway.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Certainly, child. Nothing is so desirable in danger as safety.

STELLA.

Here's Mr. Baverstock's chair. Will some one give me a hand? [*ETHEL helps her.*] Thank you so much. Now these chairs and things—I feel just like Joan of Arc, only she had a costume of armour. I wish I had, though it sounds rather cold. There, we're getting on beautifully.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Hand me these palms, Ethel.

ETHEL.

These! Why, surely, Aunt ——

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Do as I bid you. [*Crossing with palm, followed by ETHEL with another.*] General Bolingbroke always said the War Office had great faith in creating obstacles. Now bolt the windows.

[*ETHEL bolts windows. STELLA goes to close the gates, ETHEL helping her. The gate sticks.*

STELLA.

Never mind. That'll keep out a lot of people. [*Telephone bell rings.*] There's the telephone. Shall I ——? Yes, some one must attend to it. [*With receiver at ear.*] Yes, here I am. No, I'm not Sir Montagu, but I'll tell him. What? The enemy is advancing with great caution? Yes, tell the General to be sure and stop them.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Ask for a clergyman.

STELLA.

Yes. High or Low?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Moderately High, please.

STELLA.

Yes. Are you there? We want a clergyman sent up at once, please, moderately High. What? You can't?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

They must.

STELLA.

Mrs. Bolingbroke says you must. Who is she? She's the sister of Mr. Carlton, the Cabinet Minister.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

You might mention that my late husband was a general.

STELLA.

Yes. Her husband was a general. What? No, not in the Salvation Army. Oh! how dare you?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

What did he say?

STELLA.

It sounded like a request to give that information

to the Marines, and he's gone away. [*Puts up receiver.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Impertinent man !

STELLA.

Isn't the barricade splendid ! Now we can breathe more freely.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*His voice heard behind barricade.*] What on earth is all this for ?

STELLA.

It's a barricade. We did it all ourselves

SIR MONTAGU.

Absurd ! I can't get in.

STELLA.

Of course you can't. We built it to keep out enemies and people.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I think, Sir Montagu, if you saw it from here, you'd like it.

SIR MONTAGU.

I shall have it removed. [*He appears on top of barricade.*] Now I'm here, I see no prospect of getting down, and I may tell you that we're in the most imminent danger. [*He tries to get down, but finds the structure too shaky, and remains on top.*]

ALL.

Imminent danger !

SIR MONTAGU.

Yes. I believe I heard a volley.

STELLA.

A volley ! Then I'm off !

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

To the cellars ! To the cellars !

[*STELLA rushes out, followed by MRS. BOLINGBROKE. ETHEL is following them, and has almost reached the door, when SIR MONTAGU speaks to her. She stops.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Still on top of barricade.*] One moment, Miss Carlton. The danger is not really imminent, and

the volley was a mere device to get the others away. I wish to say in this, the last moment that we may be alone, that since I have met you I have been raised and elevated to a higher sphere of existence. I know that to make love when one is elderly is like singing a song of youth when the voice is gone ; but, Ethel, I love you, and I know that you are too pure and good to despise a passion that is at its height. [*Nearly falls.*] I do not ask you to answer me now. This is an hour for deeds, not words, and I feel a certain inconvenience in addressing you from this structure. [*Nightingale heard singing.*] Hark ! — a nightingale singing a love-song to the moon !

ETHEL.

I don't think it's a real nightingale.

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh yes, I know the bird. Its nest is in the aloes. Go to the protection of your father. I shall keep watch over both of you. Don't speak ! I can't bear it !

ETHEL.

Then — good-night. Sir Montagu.

SIR MONTAGU.

Good-night, child ; good-night.

[*Bird again heard.* SIR MONTAGU sits on top of barricade pensively gazing at the moon. The barricade is so arranged that at the foot of it is a couch. As ETHEL turns to go, CAREW appears. She holds up a warning finger to him and sinks on couch. He, unseen by SIR MONTAGU, creeps over, sits beside her and embraces her.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*As the nightingale continues singing, and believing himself to be alone.*] Strange, that though the very air is charged with impending disaster, I can only think of her. Sing on, sweet nightingale, sing me your song of love? Pure angel, to whom the clasp of loving arms is as yet unknown. Then sing, sweet nightingale, sing on!

[*The nightingale suddenly stops. The door opens and BAVERSTOCK enters with the nightingale and a glass of water. He begins blowing it vigorously, to the amazement of* SIR MONTAGU.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

THE THIRD ACT.

Scene :— As before, except that the barricade is now removed.

As the curtain rises, SIR MONTAGU is discovered at writing-table. BAVERSTOCK, an ORDERLY, and a CLERK are in attendance.

SIR MONTAGU.

Headquarters Office immediately. [*Hands paper to BAVERSTOCK.*] Have that put into code at once. Bring me the Colonial Office rules and regulations. [*CLERK, ORDERLY, and BAVERSTOCK go out. Telephone-bell rings. With receiver to his ear.*] Yes, yes. I'm Sir Montagu. Quite so. You say there is no immediate danger? Excellent! D'you know, I think you might send up another hundred men as a reinforcement. Eh? Yes, one hundred. I won't tell Captain Rivers: he might

consider it a slight on his men's efficiency, and on his own. What? Eh? Yes, under the command of Major Kildare. Quite so. At once. [*Puts up receiver.*] Thank Heaven! The rebellion seems to be almost over. And Kildare, who is to bring the reinforcements, is a thorough soldier.

BUTLER.

[*Entering.*] Beg your pardon, your Excellency, might I speak to you?

SIR MONTAGU.

Certainly, Groves.

BUTLER.

'Aving just 'eard as 'ostilities may take place at any moment, sir, I think it right to inform you that I engaged myself this morning to Miss Spinks.

SIR MONTAGU.

Mrs. Bolingbroke's maid! Bless my soul, Groves, this is very sudden!

BUTLER.

Yes, your Excellency. I was took quite of a heap.

SIR MONTAGU.

Dear, dear !

BUTLER.

Yes, sir. But what I want to bring to your Excellency's notice is the behaviour of the sentry. Instead of doin' 'is dooty up and down 'is beat, 'e's bin standin' at ease under them aloes for the last 'alf hour, beneath my *fiancée's* window, singin' " I want yer, ma honey, yes, I do ! "

SIR MONTAGU.

Most extraordinary ! I'll inquire into this, Groves.

BUTLER.

'Thank you, sir. [*Goes towards door.*] I don't wish 'im no 'arm, sir. P'r'aps 'e was took sudden-like too. [*Exit.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

This is very remarkable. A midsummer madness is clearly in the air. I cannot, of course, believe that I myself am affected, but —— [*Listening intently.*] Yes ? a woman's footstep ! She — Ethel — is coming here ! I know her tread amid a thousand.

[*Arranges tie, cuffs, and smooths hair.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE *enters*.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Ah, Sir Montagu! Well, what news?

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Disappointed.*] None, so far. You ought to be in your room.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I have ventured here in search of my anti-epidemic tabloids. I lost them last night, and I feel so peculiar. [SIR MONTAGU *looks about for them.*] No, pray don't trouble to look for them, for I see you're worried. Come, sit here by me. Let us forget for a moment the peril we are in and talk of other things. Do you know, in many ways you remind me of dear General Bolingbroke. He was extremely good-looking and quite devoted to me.

SIR MONTAGU.

Was he? [*Aside*] She's showing all the symptoms.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Do you never feel how desirable it is that some

good woman, not too young, should dispense your hospitality here, sharing your joys and sorrows, sharing——

SIR MONTAGU.

The expenses?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Possibly. [*Sighs.*] Are you feeling better?

SIR MONTAGU.

Not appreciably, thank you.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

How shall I soothe you? Shall I tell you of an enchanting dream that came to me last night? It was the soft spring twilight of a leafy June, and we — you and I — were young again.

SIR MONTAGU.

Really?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

The moon, in a bridal veil of falling dew ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh! The moon was up, was she?

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Yes, and we were bathed in its sheen. Then — do not forget this is only a dream — we found ourselves chained with garlands of aloe blossoms.

SIR MONTAGU.

It *is* the aloes!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

And as the sun rose ——

SIR MONTAGU.

Excuse me, the moon.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Ah no! for dawn was breaking.

SIR MONTAGU.

Forgive me, but really — where *are* those tabloids?
[*Rises and looks about.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

And then the scene changed. We had both grown older. The church was decked with white blossoms.

You and I and the clergyman stood — and then, oh! Montagu. [*Leaning her head on his shoulder.*] What has come over me? [*Enter CAREW and BAVERSTOCK. She starts away from SIR MONTAGU.*] Oh! Ah! — we were looking for my tabloids.

BAVERSTOCK.

So I saw. .

CAREW.

Why, here they are! [*Takes them from table.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Thank you so much. [*Takes one, and leaves the box on table.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

Mrs. Bolingbroke was — er — er ——

BAVERSTOCK.

Precisely.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Much embarrassed.*] I was dreaming — and — well, you know, — er — good-night!

[BAVERSTOCK opens the door and MRS. BOLINGBROKE flutters out.]

SIR MONTAGU.

Just in time! Phew! Gentlemen, absurd as it may seem, I verily believe that an epidemic of love is raging, and, for aught I know, these accursed aloes are the cause.

CAREW.

I doubt it, sir, for in that case every one — guests, servants, soldiers, and so on — would be equally affected. And there's no sign of that.

SIR MONTAGU.

No sign! Why—— [SENTRY'S voice is heard singing the chorus of "*I want yer, ma honey, yes, I do!*" All listen intently and remain mute till refrain is over.] There you are. He wants her, his honey, yes, he does!

CAREW.

Still, there's Mr. Carlton and the Comtesse, they're quite normal.

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh! Are they? I'm surprised to hear it. However, be that as it may, there is one subject on which I must touch now that we are alone. You have

both elected to propose to a guest of mine. I ask you, was this loyal of you?

CAREW.

It was to save you from yourself, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

Pooh! Nonsense. However, the situation is a painful one, and must be ended. I propose to invite her to make a selection now. [*Rings bell.*] For this occasion I place you on an equal footing with myself. [*Both bow. Enter FOOTMAN.*] Present my compliments to Miss Carlton, and ask her, if she has not already retired, to be good enough to come here for a moment.

FOOTMAN.

Yes, your Excellency. [*Exit.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

I would suggest that we all adopt a calm and dignified demeanour. [*Observing BAVERSTOCK, who is spinning a chair.*] What are you doing, Baverstock?

BAVERSTOCK.

For luck, sir.

CAREW.

What rot! As if doing this — [*he spins chair*] — could affect her choice!

SIR MONTAGU.

Extremely silly superstition. Still — [*Spins chair.*]

[*As all three are spinning chairs, ETHEL enters. They drop their chairs simultaneously.*]

ETHEL.

You want me, Sir Montagu?

SIR MONTAGU.

I do, indeed. I have a painful communication to make to you. From what transpired to-night, you will not be surprised to hear that you are an object of — er — affection to —

BAVERSTOCK.

To the present company.

SIR MONTAGU.

We are unanimous on that point. There, however, unanimity ends and the question of allotment intrudes

itself. You have, in short, to choose which of us you will honour with the priceless treasure of your love.

ETHEL.

Surely, Sir Montagu, such a proceeding is unheard of! And in such a time of danger——

SIR MONTAGU.

I admit your difficulty. The knowledge that you can't avoid breaking two out of three hearts is, no doubt, disconcerting. That, however, is not your fault. The thing is to avoid breaking the most important heart.

ETHEL.

Are you really serious?

ALL.

Quite.

ETHEL.

And you, Mr. Baverstock?

BAVERSTOCK.

I have a presentiment that I shall not be selected but I remain a candidate.

CAREW.

Come, Miss Carlton, won't you choose?

ETHEL.

You ask me?

CAREW.

Yes, I have no fear. I see before us years of happiness, years of devotion on my part, years of ——

BAVERSTOCK.

Look here! Play the game! You can't begin like that before the flag's down.

ETHEL.

Very well then, I'll choose. I choose ——

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Excitedly.*] One moment! The air is stifling, and I'm parched. [*Goes to the side table and gulps down a brandy-and-soda.*] Now — now I'm ready.

ETHEL.

Then I choose ——

BAVERSTOCK.

Stop! I omitted to tell you that, if two uncles and a few cousins die suddenly, I succeed to a peerage.

ETHEL.

That could never affect my choice, for I love —
I love ———

[*Telephone-bell rings. All start, and SIR MONTAGU goes precipitately to receiver, followed by BAVERSTOCK.*

SIR MONTAGU.

[*To ETHEL.*] Excuse me one moment. Duty before pleasure.

CAREW.

News from the General!

[*The excitement caused by the bell ringing brings the three men to the telephone. ETHEL takes advantage of their backs being turned to slip out of the room. At the same time CARLTON enters and quietly takes the chair she has vacated.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

[*With receiver at ear.*] Yes, I'm Sir Montagu.

What? You say it is desirable to put out all lights here? I'll have it done at once. Thank you.

[Returns receiver.] Then, Miss Carlton —

[All look round and find that ETHEL has disappeared, and CARLTON is seated in her chair. They are much embarrassed.]

CARLTON.

Have you cabled to Downing Street?

SIR MONTAGU.

[Going to writing-table.] I have just drafted this.

[Picks up paper.]

CARLTON.

What have you said?

SIR MONTAGU.

[Reading.] Merely "Natives have risen over new marriage laws. Please cable instructions, pending which I shall assert British supremacy in conjunction with Mr. Carlton, who arrived here yesterday."

CARLTON.

H'm — er — suppress my name in the meantime. You see, my presence in ill-health is equivalent to official absence. In fact, I am not here.

SIR MONTAGU.

As you please. [*Strikes out words on draft telegram.* To CAREW.] There, you understand.

CAREW.

Perfectly, sir.

SIR MONTAGU.

I think, Mr. Carlton, we need apprehend no danger for the night. I would suggest that, as no doubt you're exhausted, you should retire.

CARLTON.

I'll stretch myself here for the night, if you don't mind. The sentry gives a sense of security.

SIR MONTAGU.

Do so by all means. Gentlemen, we must ask for Miss Carlton's decision later. And now, where do you take up position, Baverstock?

BAVERSTOCK.

I thought, sir, of sleeping in the passage near Miss Carlton's room.

SIR MONTAGU.

Eh?

BAVERSTOCK.

That would ensure the safety of the ladies.

CAREW.

On the contrary, they're extremely likely to trip over you.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Taking cable from CAREW and giving it to BAVERSTOCK.*] Let that cable go at once.

[*Exit BAVERSTOCK.*]

CARLTON.

One moment. I'll stretch myself. [*Lies down on couch, having taken off his coat.*] I never slept so soundly as on an occasion some years ago, when I ordered a flying squadron to the Mediterranean at twenty-four hours' notice. My decisive action, however, had a wide-awake effect on the Admiralty.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*To CAREW.*] Carew, we'll make a tour of the out-buildings. You're quite ready, Mr. Carlton?

CARLTON.

Quite.

SIR MONTAGU.

Then good-night.

[CAREW turns off lights. The stage is now in darkness except without, which is in moon-light.]

CARLTON.

Good-night. If anything happens —

SIR MONTAGU.

We'll let you know. Now, Carew, softly.

[He goes out, followed by CAREW.]

CARLTON.

Alone! Ah! another instance of splendid isolation. A remarkably uncomfortable couch. I seem to have disturbed a public meeting of mosquitoes.

SENTRY.

[Voice in the distance.] Halt! who goes there?

CARLTON.

[Starting.] Eh?

SENTRY.

Pass, friend ! All's well !

CARLTON.

Ah, the Sentry. [*Yawns, turns on side, gives a gentle snore, and drops asleep.*]

[SENTRY looks in, then passes out of sight. The door opens and STELLA enters in a white tea-gown, carrying a lighted candle and the poker.]

STELLA.

[*Not seeing CARLTON, who is asleep.*] Dear me !
Pitch darkness !

Enter RIVERS cautiously at back. The following in loud stage whispers.

RIVERS.

Hush !

STELLA.

[*Alarmed.*] Who is it ? Stand, or I fire,

RIVERS.

Hush !

STELLA.

Who is it? Enemies, or what?

RIVERS.

Hush! It's I — Rivers. It's all right. I'm looking for a spot to post a picket. The verandah, I think will do. You'd better go to your room.

STELLA.

No. I decline to occupy the tower any longer. If I must be bombarded, I prefer bombardment on the ground-floor. Besides, I've got this.

RIVERS.

What?

STELLA.

The poker. It isn't exactly a graceful weapon, but I've had some useful practice upstairs on a bolster.

RIVERS.

Hush! here is the Sentry. Put out the light. [*He blows out the candle.*]

[SENTRY *appears, looks in suspiciously, and passes on.*]

RIVERS.

I must see Sir Montagu about the picket. Where is he ?

STELLA.

Through there, I think, in his office.

RIVERS.

Then I'll leave you. You want rest.

STELLA.

Yes, please. [*As he is going.*] Of course you understand that this costume, though white, is a tea-gown ?

RIVERS.

Quite so.

[*He disappears along verandah.*]

STELLA.

And now for such rest as is possible. [*She arranges herself comfortably in a cane chair.*]

SENTRY.

[*Looking in searchingly.*] Halt ! Who goes there ?

BAVERSTOCK.

[*In the distance.*] Friend!

SENTRY.

Pass, friend! All's well! [BAVERSTOCK *appears at back. The following scene in loud stage whispers.*] Beg pardon, sir, there's somethin' bin movin' inside. I think it's native spies.

BAVERSTOCK.

Good heavens! In there?

SENTRY.

Yes, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

Ha! Well — look here — your rifle's loaded, isn't it?

SENTRY.

Yes, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

Good! Follow me. No, you go first. I'll turn on the light suddenly, you cover them with your rifle.

SENTRY.

Right, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

Now softly !

[*They enter on tiptoe, BAVERSTOCK following*
SENTRY. *He goes to electric switch. The*
SENTRY *stands with his rifle at shoulder*
as for firing.

STELLA.

[*In stage whisper.*] Whatever's happening?

CARLTON.

[*In stage whisper, and sitting up.*] Is this a dream?

STELLA.

There — yes, I see two crawling somethings.

CARLTON.

Bless my soul ! Figures groping in the dark !

STELLA.

What, oh what shall I do ? Ah ! the door ! [*Gets*
down from chair on hands and knees and creeps towards
door.]

CARLTON.

The natives are on us ! [*Gets down from couch on hands and knees.*]

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Still in a whisper.*] Are you ready ?

SENTRY.

Yes, sir.

BAVERSTOCK.

Go ! [*Turns up lights and discovers STELLA and CARLTON on their knees opposite to each other.*] Mr. Carlton ! Comtesse ! — I beg a thousand pardons ! [*Turns the light off.*]

SENTRY.

Shall I fire, sir ?

BAVERSTOCK.

Certainly not.

CARLTON.

[*Ponderously.*] Turn on the light ! [*BAVERSTOCK turns on light and the SENTRY, recognising CARLTON, comes to attention and presents arms.*] The situation.

compromising as it may seem, is in reality childishly simple.

STELLA.

Hadn't we better get off our knees? I desire to point out that this garment, though white, is a tea-gown.

CARLTON.

The fact is, I found it impossible to rest in my room; and we — er — came here —

STELLA.

Separately.

CARLTON.

[To BAVERSTOCK.] Oblige me by requesting your military assistant to retire.

BAVERSTOCK.

[To SENTRY.] Go away.

SENTRY.

Yes, sir.

[Shoulders arms, grins broadly, and marches off.]

BAVERSTOCK.

It seems we mistook each other for hostile natives.

STELLA.

Exactly. But we're not so black as we're painted.

BAVERSTOCK.

[*Going up to back of writing-table and lighting candles.*] I'm afraid it is my duty to turn off the lights for safety's sake. But here are candles.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Without.*] Mr. Baverstock!

BAVERSTOCK.

Sir Montagu's voice. Will you excuse me?

STELLA.

With pleasure.

CARLTON.

And remember the attitude in which you — er — surprised us ——

BAVERSTOCK.

Was too devotional not to be perfectly respectable.

[*He bows solemnly and goes out.*]

CARLTON.

[*With relief.*] Ah!

STELLA.

I feel that we have reached a point at which any self-respecting woman must inevitably burst into tears. Do you mind?

CARLTON.

I should feel it very deeply.

STELLA.

We met by accident, we must part by design. Good-night!

CARLTON.

One moment! I see the hand of Destiny in this nocturnal adventure. Comtesse — Stella — may I call you Stella?

STELLA.

[*Very demurely.*] Oh, yes. It's my name, you know. Would you mind putting on your coat? I make it a rule never to speak to anybody without one in the evening.

CARLTON.

Certainly.

[*Gets coat and puts it on.*]

STELLA.

I'll look another way. Let me know when you are ready.

CARLTON.

It is on.

STELLA.

Thank you so much.

CARLTON.

At my time of life it is not easy to speak with the burning enthusiasm of a younger man.

STELLA.

Oh! then you're going to say something out of the common... There's a way, you know, of inducing fluency, only I scarcely like to suggest it.

CARLTON.

Have no fear, Stella.

STELLA.

I've heard it said that it's a very good thing to ——

CARLTON.

Yes. To what?

STELLA.

To get a firm grasp of the subject.

CARLTON.

I see. Then may I take the liberty?

STELLA.

If it will help you. [*He puts his arm round her waist.*] O Liberty! What crimes are committed in thy name!

CARLTON.

Stella — I ask you to be my wife.

STELLA.

O Henry! Tell me — is it because I am a woman of wealth?

CARLTON.

Wealth! No! I seek the violet, not the marigold.

STELLA.

I'm not — not much of a violet, you know. Nor because I am a woman of rank?

CARLTON.

Rank! Of course not.

STELLA.

Well, then, Henry — I am yours.

Enter SIR MONTAGU, followed by CAREW and BAVERSTOCK, all carrying lighted candles.

SIR MONTAGU.

[*Seeing CARLTON.*] Ah! I fear we disturb you.

STELLA.

Monty!

SIR MONTAGU.

Oh, woman! Rivers wants to post a picket here.
[*Suddenly a volley is heard.*] Good heavens! We are
attacked! [*A second volley. All blow out candles and
take shelter behind various pieces of furniture.*]

CARLTON.

Hark again!

BAVERSTOCK.

Merciful powers! What's to be done?

SIR MONTAGU.

This is terrible ! We're besieged !

STELLA.

Henry, where are you ?

CARLTON.

Here, at your side.

STELLA.

My hero !

MRS. BOLINGBROKE *and* ETHEL *enter*.

ETHEL.

Captain Carew ! Captain Carew !

CAREW.

Ethel !

ETHEL.

Ah ! there you are !

CAREW.

Here, and safe.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

Come back, child, come back !

SIR MONTAGU *and* BAVERSTOCK.

Hush! [MRS. BOLINGBROKE *starts.*]

CARLTON *and* STELLA.

Hush! [MRS. BOLINGBROKE *starts again and sinks in chair.*]

CAREW.

Here's Rivers flying to us.

SIR MONTAGU.

Get him in! Let us know the worst.

RIVERS *enters in great excitement. Sword drawn.*

RIVERS.

The attack has begun, but I think our volleys have silenced it. We saw an immense force moving towards us. I opened fire. Look to yourselves. We've stopped them, I hope, but we can't tell. Our fire has killed hundreds.

SIR MONTAGU.

This is appalling.

CARLTON.

But how could you see that hundreds were killed?

RIVERS.

I couldn't. I saw nothing. It was pitch dark. But the war correspondent of the *Amandaland Times*, who was with me, says *he* saw. Our discipline was perfect. The enthusiasm and patriotism of our men superb. Hark! Listen!

[*Galloping of a horse is heard.*]

CARLTON.

A galloping horse!

[*SENTRY is heard challenging.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

Who is it?

CAREW.

[*As sounds get nearer.*] I believe — yes — no — yes it's Major Kildare, of your own regiment, Rivers.

SIR MONTAGU.

Ah! Of course he's arrived in the nick of time with reinforcements.

RIVERS.

Reinforcements! What reinforcements?

CAREW.

Here he is.

KILDARE.

[*Who rushes in at back.*] I beg your pardon, sir, but where *is* Captain Rivers? Oh! there you are; you—you——

SIR MONTAGU.

Kildare, what is the matter?

KILDARE.

Matter, sir? I come here to reinforce Captain Rivers, and, by all the powers, if he doesn't fire volleys at me!

CARLTON.

What? Were you the enemy?

RIVERS.

I assure you, sir, I didn't know. We thought you were——

KILDARE.

Thought, sir? A soldier should never think! [*A third volley is heard.*] Ah! you're at it again! Stop 'em, sir, stop 'em!

[*Exit RIVERS.*]

SIR MONTAGU.

Carew, the military arrangements being some-

what imperfect, not to say involved, I must ask you to go to the front and bring me absolutely reliable information.

CAREW.

I am ready, sir. [*A bugle sounds the "Cease fire."*]

ETHEL.

[*Throwing her arms round CAREW'S neck.*] No, no, Charles!

CARLTON.

Ethel!

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Rising.*] My child!

STELLA.

What is this?

SIR MONTAGU *and* BAVERSTOCK.

What is this?

ETHEL.

This? That he is going to face the enemy, and I love him! We are engaged!

ALL.

What!

CAREW.

It is true, sir. [*Tries to release himself.*] Darling, release me.

ETHEL.

[*Quite overcome with emotion.*] Charles!

CAREW.

[*Bravely.*] Sweetheart, love is our guide in days of peace, but duty is our pioneer to-night.

ETHEL.

[*Sinking on her knees.*] My hero!

[*CAREW kisses her hand and rushes out heroically.*

STELLA.

[*To CARLTON.*] Henry, I see, I feel, I know that you, too, are going to the front.

CARLTON.

Oh no! On the contrary. I do not intend to desert my future wife.

STELLA.

My true hearted Englishman! [*Falls on his arms.*]

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

[*Amazed.*] I demand a solution of this monstrous exhibition.

CARLTON.

She is joining the family, Honoria. Oblige me by kissing her.

STELLA.

My sister!

[*MRS. BOLINGBROKE is so overwhelmed with surprise that she submits to a kiss from*
STELLA.

MRS. BOLINGBROKE.

I have done it, but never again,

[*Collapses on couch.*

CARLTON.

It's terrible to think that hundreds have been killed.

KILDARE.

That is a slight exaggeration. One bullet hit the ammunition-cart mule.

STELLA.

No one dead?

KILDARE.

No, nor even wounded.

CARLTON.

You see, their rifles are of the new pattern.

[SENTRY *is heard challenging.*

KILDARE.

There's some one else galloping up.

CARLTON.

Who is it?

SIR MONTAGU.

Bless my soul! Fresh complications!

KILDARE.

It's Carew returning.

CAREW *enters hurriedly and out of breath.*

CAREW.

An orderly has galloped up with the news that the rising is over. In fact, it never took place.

[ETHEL *rushes to him.*

ALL.

Never took place?

SIR MONTAGU.

Turn up the lights.

CAREW.

It seems, sir, the natives, hearing Mr. Carlton had arrived as an emissary of the Great White Queen, decided to assemble as a tribute of loyalty. It was night, and, under the belief that the demonstration was hostile, the troops were called out and opened fire.

SIR MONTAGU.

Good heavens !

CAREW.

But, fortunately, the General explained that our fire had merely been a salute in Mr. Carlton's honour, and, incredible as it may seem, this explanation was accepted.

SIR MONTAGU.

This is an immense relief.

CARLTON.

We now perceive the advantage of uncompromising firearms. I shall not fail, Sir Montagu, to report your able statesmanship to the proper quarter.

SIR MONTAGU.

I have but done my duty, and your co-operation has been of the greatest assistance.

CARLTON.

Cable to Downing Street that, despite ill-health, I was able to devote my energies to the suppression of the rebellion.

[A Band is heard in the distance playing a rousing march.]

SIR MONTAGU.

[With deep melancholy.] Baverstock!

BAVERSTOCK.

[Dejectedly.] Sir!

SIR MONTAGU.

We'll hack down the aloes to-morrow.

[Cheering is heard in distance.]

BAVERSTOCK.

Yes, sir.

CARLTON.

Stella, look, our defenders!

[They are looking at the Soldiers, who are heard marching, amid cheers.]

STELLA.

Brave fellows! Brave fellows!

CAREW. . . .

Ethel, listen ! Our wedding march.

ETHEL.

My soldier husband !

[ETHEL *and* CAREW *embrace fervently, as do*
CARLTON *and* STELLA. *Loud cheering and*
crash from the Band as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

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